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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000465

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TAGS: [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MW](#) [BK](#) [YI](#) [GG](#) [UP](#)

SUBJECT: MARCHING TOWARDS DECEMBER: NATO DISCUSSES THE  
WESTERN BALKANS

REF: E-MAIL CONTAINING FOUR-COUNTRIES NON-PAPER SENT  
TO EUR/RPM ON OCTOBER 21

Classified By: Ambassador Ivo H. Daalder for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) SUMMARY: NATO Secretary General (SYG) Anders Fogh Rasmussen presided over an informal session of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) on October 20 to discuss views on the Western Balkans in preparation for decisions to be taken at the December Foreign Ministerial, a discussion informed by a non-paper we drafted with the Greek, German and Polish delegations (see ref e-mail). Although many capitals are still weighing the issues, there appeared to be an emerging consensus in favor of granting a positive decision in December on Montenegro's request to join the Membership Action Plan (MAP). Allies were less certain about Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) request, with many nations deferring their decisions pending the outcome of the joint U.S.-European Union (EU) proposal. While many Allies welcomed positive steps in increasing NATO's relations with Serbia, nations understood that the pace of developing these relations would have to be determined by Serbia. The SYG failed to respond to strong Allied support for a NAC trip to the Balkans. END SUMMARY.

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Montenegro: On the doorstep  
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12. (U) Slovakia led a small group of PermReps (including Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania, Spain and Turkey) which argued for positive decisions on both Montenegro's and BiH's requests to join MAP in December. Norway, Greece, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Italy, Estonia, France, Belgium, Latvia, Luxembourg, Iceland and Denmark stated that Montenegro has essentially done everything NATO has asked of it in relation to reforms and leaned towards making a position decision in December. Although Germany raised continuing concerns about freedom of the media, independence of the judiciary and the lack of checks and balances in Montenegro, it admitted that Montenegro's current situation is not unlike other former aspirant countries when they were granted MAP, and argued for a positive decision. Romania supported Germany's remarks.

13. (U) The UK stated that it supports granting MAP to both

countries, but prefers to delay this decision after both countries conclude their Individual Partnership Action Plan reviews in Spring 2010. The Netherlands proved to be the largest naysayer in the room, posturing that no decision should be made on NATO's enlargement until Allies discuss "the future of the Alliance" at their Fall 2010 Lisbon Summit. Italy and Denmark immediately responded that enlargement decisions have nothing to do with any such potential discussion. Canada also indicated that Ottawa was not yet ready to make a decision on MAP for either country.

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BiH: Still stuck on the landing  
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¶4. (U) Although no one seemed to doubt BiH's desire for Euro-Atlantic integration, plenty of Allies seemed wary of BiH's current trajectory. France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Iceland and Latvia pushed a more prudent approach with BiH, wishing to see how the situation in Sarajevo evolves in the coming months before making a decision on BiH's request to join MAP. Portugal and Romania pushed for the inclusion of strong language in the December Foreign Ministerial communique that would encourage BiH to make further reforms. Norway stated that given the current political situation in BiH, NATO should keep all possibilities open.

¶5. (U) In a line similar to the UK's argument to delay a decision until 2010, Germany -- who passionately argued that

USNATO 00000465 002 OF 003

"MAP can be granted only once" -- recommended denying MAP to BiH in December, with the caveat that if BiH makes significant forward progress in 2010, it can still join MAP in time to start the next MAP cycle in Fall 2010. Italy backed Germany's recommendation. Lithuania and Bulgaria stated that they could eventually support MAP for BiH.

¶6. (U) Greece and Bulgaria said they would not object to granting MAP in December, but acknowledged they have concerns about BiH's future. Spain also admitted lingering doubts, but argued for making a positive decision in December. Slovenia and Croatia admitted that the political situation in BiH could be better than it is now, but argued that NATO should grant MAP in December on the basis that BiH is a "special case" and that MAP could prove a catalyst for reform.

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To link or not to link, that is the question  
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¶7. (U) A side issue that has emerged in the discussions on Montenegro and BiH is whether a MAP decision on these countries should be linked together. Norway, Slovenia, Germany, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Hungary, Canada, France, Spain and Iceland all stated that aspirant countries should be judged on their own merits individually, and that decisions on Montenegro's and BiH's MAP requests should not be linked together. The UK wanted to link -- and delay -- a decision on both aspirant countries together. Furthermore, Croatia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary, Albania, Canada, Estonia and Poland argued that MAP decisions for Montenegro and BiH should not be linked to any issues regarding Georgia and Ukraine's path to the Alliance, and pushed for the inclusion of strong language in the December Foreign Ministerial communique to assure Georgia and Ukraine of their forward path to membership.

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Serbia: Inching forward?  
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¶8. (U) In regards to NATO's growing relationship with Serbia, the SYG informed Allies that modification of the Military Technical Agreement (MTA) is Serbia's paramount concern, but

stated that Serbia should suggest specific proposals on modification of the agreement before NATO moves forward. Norway and France said that Serbia needed to make extra efforts to "provide traction" for increasing relations with NATO, and that modification of the MTA is one way to accomplish this goal. Greece made a plea for increasing NATO's relations with Serbia in the "right" way, not the "quick" way.

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NAC trip to the Balkans?  
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¶9. (U) Germany pressed the SYG, who so far has been resistant to travel with the NAC to the Western Balkans, to reverse course and visit Montenegro and BiH before the December Foreign Ministerial. Croatia, Lithuania, Hungary, Albania, Italy and the UK all echoed Germany's plea. Latvia stated it had no objections to making such a trip. Even Spain, who thus far has been resistant to travel to the region, said it would not stand in the way of a NAC visit to Montenegro and BiH if all other Allies agreed, but argued that the timing of such a visit should be carefully considered. Luxembourg supported making a NAC visit to the region, but also backed Spain's point on timing.

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Comment  
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¶10. (C/NF) Seeking to sum up Allies' comments, the SYG got it right on most issues -- Montenegro (which requested MAP in

USNATO 00000465 003 OF 003

November 2008) deserves an answer this December, and strong communique language will be needed to assure Georgia and Ukraine that they are firmly on the membership path -- but he made one large misstep in characterizing MAP as "NATO's preferred option" to join the Alliance, which is not an official position. He also stated that in referring to enlargement, he prefers to use the term "Open Door" policy because of the negative connotation that "enlargement" means expansion directed at a third party. Furthermore, he appeared unswayed by Allies' calls for a NAC trip to the Western Balkans, and his lack of reference to this issue was a glaring omission from his concluding remarks. Ambassador subsequently inquired of the Private Office what the status of the trip was, and was informed that the fact that some large countries (U.S., France) had said nothing was taken as the absence of consensus. However, Ambassador informed the SYG the day before that he now believed that Spain would not oppose a trip, and that there was indeed a consensus. Absent a change of heart by the SYG, nations will press for a vote at the next NAC to underscore the lack of opposition to a NAC trip to BiH and Montenegro before the December Ministerial. Despite the relief most Allies felt finally engaging in this long overdue discussion, any positive momentum gained was squandered with frustration directed at the SYG and his selective hearing.

DAALDER